
**Draft summary of meeting of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders
With H.E Mr. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, President of ECOSOC
10-11 am, 14 February 2017
United Nations Headquarters**

On 14 February 2017, DESA/DSD facilitated a meeting between the President of ECOSOC, H.E Amb. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, and 56 representatives of Major Groups and other stakeholders (MGoS) who joined the meeting both in person and via webex. The meeting provided an opportunity for the MGoS to provide their views and recommendations to the President of ECOSOC on three issues: a) the 2017 HLPF thematic reviews; b) the 2017 HLPF voluntary national reviews; and c) Enhancing the participation of MGoS in the HLPF.

In his opening remarks, the President of ECOSOC noted that the 2030 Agenda and the related 17 SDGs could not be achieved without the broad participation and contribution of all sectors of society. It was therefore befitting that the modalities and organizational arrangements of the HLPF make it one of the most inclusive intergovernmental bodies of the UN allowing for the extensive participation of MGoS in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. He noted that the theme of the 2017 HLPF will be “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”, and that, for the first time, the HLPF will also review in-depth a set of 7 SDGs (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14, and 17). The HLPF will also feature VNRs by 44 volunteering countries. Speaking on behalf of the MGoS HLPF Coordination Mechanism, the co-chairs of the mechanism welcomed the meeting as a timely opportunity to have an exchange with the President on the HLPF and noted that it set a good precedent for preparing for the 2017 session, as well as beyond. The HLPF coordination mechanism would stand ready to follow up and work in close cooperation with the President and UN DESA on the outcomes of the meeting.

On the **HLPF Thematic reviews**, the MGoS proposed that the usefulness and substance of the HLPF panel/round table discussions be reviewed and assessed. It would be important to provide a clearer direction on how the outcomes of these discussions could filter more effectively into the policy guidance and recommendations to be provided by the HLPF. The MGoS underscored the crucial role of the HLPF in providing leadership to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and saw the HLPF report and Ministerial Declaration as useful tools for providing policy guidance and recommendations for subsequent action at the global, regional and national levels.

MGoS also stressed the need to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to the VNRs as opposed to round tables/panel discussions. This would be particularly critical in 2017, when the session will feature 44 VNR presentations.

Regarding **Voluntary National Reviews**, stakeholders shared some lessons learned from a report produced by the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI). According to the report, only six out of the 22 2016 HLPF volunteering countries had a defined body responsible for 2030 Agenda coordination and steering at the national level. Furthermore, few of the 22 volunteering countries provided details in their VNR reports on their stakeholder engagement modalities or clarified how their strategic SDG documents would be turned into action to achieve the goals.

MGoS agreed that the benefit of the VNRs is in the national level preparations, which were seen as an opportunity to enhance national institutional arrangements and to coordinate with different stakeholders (UN system, business, civil society and others). MGoS underlined the importance of having official and formal national mechanisms in place for stakeholder participation and input.

On **Enhancing the participation of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders in the HLPF**, stakeholders focused on the following issues: 1) representation, 2) funding and 3) sufficient time and accessibility. The importance of opening channels of participation to the most marginalized was emphasized. The Stakeholder group of Persons with Disabilities raised the challenges some of their members had faced with accessibility during the 2016 HLPF. DESA noted that the secretariat was in the process of consulting to see how to best address these issues in 2017. MGoS also underlined that enhanced MGoS participation included the promotion of actual access to, and attendance at meetings, access to all documents, and the opportunity to make timely interventions, including during agenda-setting and negotiations on outcome documents.

The Secretariat noted that it had funding available through a grant from the European Commission to support travel of MGoS representatives from developing countries. With this funding, the secretariat had supported the travel of 20 MGoS representatives to the 2016 HLPF. Furthermore, DSD and UNITAR had developed a training course for Member States with concrete recommendations on how to engage with stakeholders at the national level in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The course had been delivered in December 2016 for a number of the 2017 VNR countries. A second round of the course will be run for more Member States in March/April 2017.

Recommendations

- Major Groups and other Stakeholders should have access to the HLPF programme well in advance of the session. They should also be consulted during the programme preparations. The VNRs should be available on the UN DESA website as early as possible;
- The usefulness and effectiveness of thematic panels and round table discussions should be reviewed. The outcomes of these discussions should also filter more effectively into the policy guidance and recommendations to be provided by the HLPF;

- The VNRs should take place throughout the entire HLPF (not just the 3-day high-level segment) and more time should be allocated to enable in-depth discussions;
- The HLPF report and the Ministerial Declaration should be seen as useful tools to provide policy guidance and recommendations for subsequent action at the global, regional and national levels;
- At the national level, governments should establish official and formal mechanisms for stakeholder participation and contribution, including through MGoS shadow reports. Governments should also set timelines for the VNR preparations that should be publicly shared. A database should be put together to identify focal points amongst the most marginalized populations;
- Governments could organize consultations both online and face-to-face during which MGoS could bring their perspectives to the VNR preparations. Post-HLPF national debriefing sessions should also be organized;
- MGoS should actively participate in both the national VNR preparations as well in the HLPF VNR presentations. Member States should be encouraged to include MGoS in their official HLPF delegations;
- Technology should be harnessed to facilitate the participation of stakeholders outside of New York City;
- Sufficient time should be allowed for stakeholders to organize and prepare for the HLPF VNRs. This includes capacity building initiatives and increased information sharing.